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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE — Radio Service — OFFICE OF INFORMATION

HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT Friday, March 4, 1938

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "MID-WINTER VARIETY IN CANNED FOODS." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, United States Department of Agriculture.

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Today I'm going to bring you some suggestions about using canned foods. And here's the piece of news that started me off on this topic. There's a big supply of canned fruits and vegetables available now -- considerably more than last year.

But even that report from the Department of Agriculture tells only part of the story. It doesn't include the figures on home canned fruits and vegetables put up last summer by thousands of women in their own kitchens.

It's only been in comparatively recent years that canned foods have become important in our diets. When grandmother was a girl, almost the only winter vegetables were cabbage, potatoes, and other root crops that could be stored in the cellar.

In fact it wasn't until Napoleon Bonaparte's time that the method of preserving food in airtight containers was discovered. A French scientist named Apper worked out the way to preserve food in airtight containers so that Napoleon's army could be fed on campaign marches, when it was far from the home base. Then later with modern machinery and tin cans came commercial canning on a large scale. And the small size steam pressure cooker made canning at home practical.

Now with the products of both the home and commercial canner a better-balanced diet is assured the year around. We can enjoy the products of the spring and summer garden straight through the year.

So much for a bit of the history of canning -- now for the cooking suggestions. There's a special technique to getting the maximum appetite appeal and food value out of canned foods. This technique is the same for all canned foods and boils down to three general rules.

First, and most important from the standpoint of food value, is this. Use the liquid from the food whenever possible. This liquid contains valuable minerals and vitamins that should not be poured down the sink drain. If you don't want to serve the juice on the food -- condense it and serve it in sauces -- in gravies -- or in soups.

Next for the cooking. Whatever method of cooking you use, don't do it any longer than necessary. Remember that the food has already been cooked once during the processing in the can. Cooking it the second time may have the same results as any overcooking -- it makes the vegetables mushy and sometimes spoils the flavor.

And here's the third suggestion -- most important of all from the standpoint of appetite appeal. Vary the seasonings you use with canned foods. And serve different kinds of dishes. Be creative.

Most canned vegetables are seasoned only with salt. This leaves you free to use your skill in adding just a suggestion of onion -- the way the French do. Or to put in that grating of mace or nutmeg that many Europeans like -- or the dash of curry powder that gives the food a Far Eastern tang.

Two of the most popular of canned foods are corn and tomatoes. Canned corn is put up either whole-grain or cream style, that is the grain is scored and the pulp scraped out. These two kinds of corn are both excellent for different kinds of dishes.

Take the cream style. It is just the right consistency for corn pudding. Thicken the corn with eggs, combine it with milk, and season to suit your fancy. Then bake it like a custard.

The whole-grain corn is better for corn fritters. And what's better on a cold winter day than crispy, crusty, piping hot corn fritters. Drop the fritter mixture into shallow or deep fat and fry slowly. This slow frying will let the center of the fritters get done by the time the outside is browned.

Tomatoes are especially valuable for their tart flavor and high vitamin C content. They often lend flavor to other vegetables in the form of a tomato sauce. One of the most popular of all tomato dishes is tomato scallop.

To make this, cook and season the canned tomatoes. Then add crisp golden brown buttered bread crumbs. It's a good idea to toast the bread before mixing it with the tomatoes to keep it from getting mushy.

Use a tart sauce to add zest to canned beets. But it does something more. The acid in the sauce brings out the bright crimson color of the beets and makes them look as well as taste better. Maybe that bright crimson color is why beets with this kind of a sauce are called Harvard beets.

Asparagus timbales are another interesting possibility. Cut the canned asparagus up into short lengths, mix with a thick white sauce and beaten egg, pour into timbale molds, and bake, like custard, in a moderate oven. When you turn the timbales out of the molds onto a hot platter, garnish with scarlet paprika.

Here's an especially attractive dessert made from canned berries. It's called a flummery. And for it you may use the sweetened juice of blackberries, raspberries, loganberries, or any of the berries with distinctive flavor. Thicken the strained juice with cornstarch -- touch it up with lemon juice. After cooking in a double boiler, pour it into individual dishes, chill, and serve it with plain or whipped cream. You have all of the delicious berry flavor and none of the seeds.

And that's all the suggestions for using canned foods I have time for today. But their name is legion.

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